

MIAMI CITY BALLET: GEORGE BALANCHINE'S

# *Nutcracker*

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



Support for the Student Enrichment Through the Arts program has been provided by the following Funds at the Community Foundation of Broward:

**Mildred H. Fagen Charitable Fund**

**Leonard & Sally Robbins Fund**

**Mary and Alex Mackenzie Community Impact Fund**

**The Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Broward Community Fund**



# The Nutcracker

## How to use Curriculum Connections:

Dear Teacher,

We appreciate you!

This guide can help in your classroom, whether before or after coming to see a play or musical it can be used to highlight important concepts. The curriculum connections introduced by the Broward Center for the Performing Arts are always aligned to the Florida Standards with the idea that they introduce another tool to effectively implement engaging methods to bring the page to the stage.

Curriculum Connections improve comprehension, help students organize information, and assist students' metacognition by enabling students to check for understanding. It is designed to be used before or after coming to the theater unless otherwise stated and may contain activities for certain grade levels (this will be clearly labeled).

Curriculum Connections will always contain a reminder of theater etiquette as well as a social emotional learning activity, and a Student-Family Cooperative Activity. The activities may be re-printed for individual use, used on smart boards as class activities, or in groups. It is suggested to discuss the play or musical as a class before your field trip.

Remember to follow us on Facebook and Instagram @Broward Center Education and use the QR code (below) for our Teacher's Lounge to receive insight about discounted tickets and information for you and your students!





# Theater etiquette

It is often helpful to remind students of appropriate audience etiquette by explaining and discussing WHY these rules of behavior are important:

- Restroom visits are best made prior to the performance.
- Listen carefully to the ushers and your teachers. This gets everyone to your seats quickly and ensures a pleasant experience.
- Turn watches and cell phones to silent.
- Walk single file, hold hand rails as you use the steps for your safety.
- Listen carefully to each performer. They are working hard to entertain and inform with lots of clues about the story.
- Refrain from TALKING. This allows everyone to enjoy the show without distraction. Sometimes we think that if we whisper it is okay. But, if everyone in the audience whispers, it becomes disruptive.
- Laugh if something is funny, but not too loudly, you don't want to miss any dialogue.
- Photography and recording are not permitted.
- Pay attention to the lighting, scenery, costumes and music—all of these elements help provide more details to tell the story in an interesting way.
- Applaud (clap) at the end. This shows the performers that you respect and appreciate their work.

# The Nutcracker Synopsis

## Act 1:

The ballet begins on Christmas Eve. Clara, a young girl, eagerly awaits the arrival of her family's Christmas party. Her mysterious godfather, Herr Drosselmeier, a toymaker and magician, arrives with special gifts for the children. Among the gifts is a beautiful nutcracker in the shape of a soldier.

During the party, Clara's mischievous brother, Fritz, accidentally breaks the nutcracker. Devastated, Clara places the broken nutcracker under the Christmas tree. Later that night, unable to sleep, Clara sneaks back to the living room to check on the nutcracker. As the clock strikes midnight, strange things begin to happen. The Christmas tree grows tall, and mice, led by the Mouse King, invade the room. The nutcracker comes to life, and a fierce battle ensues between the toy soldiers and the mice.

## Act 2:

Clara finds herself magically transported to a fantastical world ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy. The nutcracker has transformed into a handsome prince, who guides Clara through the enchanting Land of Sweets. They encounter various characters representing different sweets and treats from around the world. Each character performs a beautiful dance to entertain Clara and the Prince.

As the festivities come to an end, Clara awakens from her dream, finding herself back in her home. Uncertain whether it was all just a dream or a magical adventure, she cherishes the memory of her enchanting journey to the Land of Sweets.

"The Nutcracker" ballet has become a holiday tradition worldwide, captivating audiences with its timeless tale of adventure, magic, and the spirit of Christmas.



# The Nutcracker Vocabulary and Terms



Ballet – a theatrical art form using dance, music, and scenery to create a story

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky – Russian composer who composed The Nutcracker

Choreograph – to design or plan movements of a dance

E.T.A. Hoffmann – the author of The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

Pantomime – acting by body movements and gestures without speaking

Pas de deux – a dance for two people used to display their beautiful technique

## **NUTCRACKER CHARACTERS AND DANCES:**

Nutcracker – a character in the ballet who comes to life as a prince

Mr. and Mrs. Petrov – Nicholas and Clara’s parents

Herr Drosselmeier – Clara’s godfather and ingenious toymaker

Sugar Candy Kingdom – a fantasy land where dancers from exotic places celebrate the defeat of the Rat King

Sugar Plum Fairy – a fairy who rules over the Sugar Candy Kingdom

Trepak – a lively Russian folk dance

Mother Matrushka – a character who keeps her children under her skirt

Nesting Dolls – Mother Matrushka’s puppet children

# The Nutcracker: Pantomime

Pantomime (sometimes called just mime) is the art of using actions or gestures without words as a means of communication. It plays an important role in ballet, as it helps the audience better understand the story and what the characters are feeling. A dancer must use the arms, hands, fingers, head and eyes, as well as the feet to make a role "come alive." Here are descriptions of some of the most familiar gestures used in ballet.

## Try them in your group:

*group work!*

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Anger          | Fist shaken                                       |
| Ask            | Hands clasped together in pleading gesture        |
| Beautiful      | Hand circling face                                |
| Call           | Hand or hands cupped around mouth                 |
| Fear           | Body leaning away with hands open and palms out   |
| Hear           | Hand pointing to or cupping ear                   |
| I/Me/Mine      | Hand to chest indicating oneself                  |
| Love           | Hands over heart                                  |
| Marriage       | Index finger pointing to ring finger on left hand |
| Remember/Think | Touch or point to temple                          |
| Royal          | Hand circling top of head to indicate crown       |
| Sad            | Finger tracing tears down face/wiping tears away  |
| See            | Finger pointing to eyes                           |

1. Which ones were the easiest to interpret?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which were the hardest?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which made you laugh out loud?

\_\_\_\_\_

Now, as a group, create an original one:

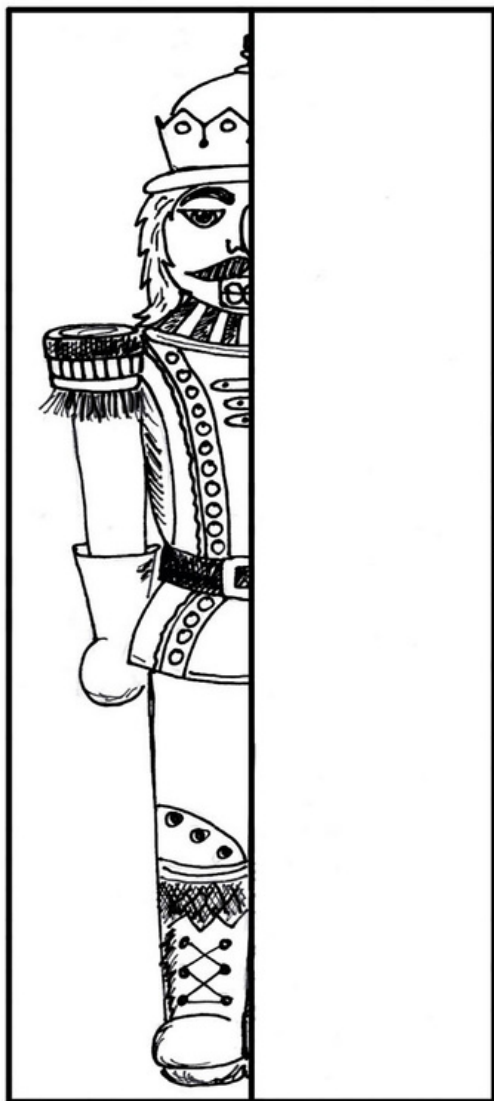
What is the feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the gesture (explain or draw) \_\_\_\_\_



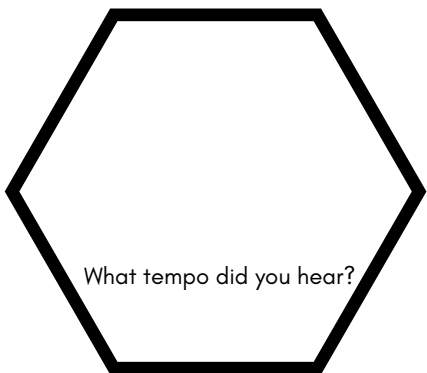
# The Nutcracker: Draw It

Can you draw the rest of the nutcracker? Complete and color.



# The Nutcracker: After the Performance

Directions: Answer the following questions contained in each shape AFTER seeing The Nutcracker.



What was your favorite scene? \_\_\_\_\_

Which musical elements did the composer use to create the MOOD of your favorite scene?

What instruments did you hear?





# The Nutcracker: Let's Write About It! Grades 4-5

Choose one of the writing prompts below, and write about it:

- My favorite role in the story of the Nutcracker is \_\_\_\_\_. I like it because...
- The Nutcracker himself told me a secret. I'm sharing it privately here with you. Now don't tell anyone!

[illegible]

# The Nutcracker: S.E.L. (Elementary)

The performers you will see in the Nutcracker are very talented, but we all have things about us that are AMAZING!

Watch (or read) **The Best Part Of Me** by Wendy Ewald and then describe or draw the best part of you!

<https://youtu.be/a6SGIDiSJk8>

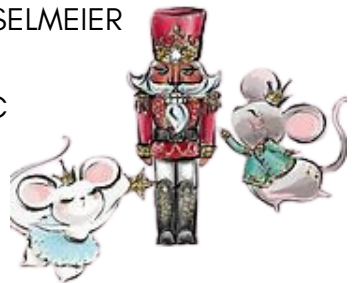


# The Nutcracker Word Search

M J H Q D O Q B C R R I O J G G T  
X Q J S A N H V F A R Z M T K O S  
B D G E R K A C R T X P I U Y U D  
O R U K A S R D I V I Y Q S G C S  
W O X A L C L T T L J D O A O B T  
O S P L C I E J Z M U L R L F F E  
G S B F N G Q J S Y D P U K T A E  
E E A W Y A U Q U I L M F Z L O W  
C L L O N M I X E U B O Y D I M S  
N M L N T M N R M I J S I G B T F  
I E E S O X S F N J E E Q A I E O  
R I T M T E A E N C E G I A N I D  
P E L F B I L E F W R L F U J S N  
M R Q W R M K B B U Y Y J I Y U A  
W B Q Y W O N F N Y V O Q P U V L  
L D L X R N E N Y X F R S S D K Z  
Z F L B R E K C A R C T U N A O N

SUGARPLUM FAIRY  
BROKEN  
HARLEQUIN  
FRITZ  
NUTCRACKER  
SNOWFLAKES  
TOY SOLDIERS

PRINCE  
BALLET  
LAND OF SWEETS  
COLUMBINE  
DROSSELMEIER  
CLARA  
MAGIC



## The Nutcracker: Let's Write About It! Grades 6-8

Choose one of the writing prompts below, and write about it:

- How did the sound of the music help you to understand what was happening on stage?
- Did the costumes tell you who the characters were? How?

[illegible]

# The Nutcracker: Let's Write About It! Grades 9-12

Choose one of the writing prompts below, and write about it:

- Would you rather be a rat (mouse) or a toy soldier? Why?
- The story of Clara needs a different ending. If I had written the Nutcracker, this is how I would have finished the story differently. . .

[illegible]

# The Nutcracker: S.E.L (6-12)

Ballet uses body language to communicate and express feelings.

Let's try to use body language in a mirroring activity too!

## **Part One: Teacher Led:**

Gather students in a circle and tell them that they will be playing a game to practice cooperation and communication.

**Say:** *"For the first part of this game you will watch me and pretend you are a mirror. Whatever movement I do, you should do too, just like a mirror. Pay attention as I change what I am doing so that you can follow along."*

Perform several pantomime motions such as pretending to brush your teeth and hair, straightening out your shirt sleeves, etc. Next, comment on what you noticed the students did well.

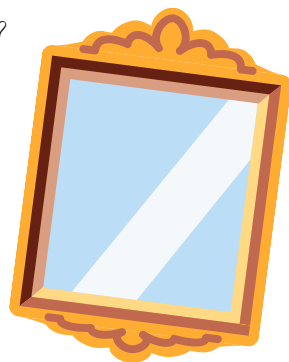
**Ask:** *"What was challenging for you?"*

## **Part Two: Student Led:**

Tell the students they will now get to take turns with a partner playing the mirror game. If you have an odd number of students, pair up with a student.

Allow students to play a few rounds with a friend or seat partner and then complete an exit slip with these questions:

1. *How did it feel to follow along with a friend and understand their movements?*
2. *Did you get better at it the more times you tried?*
3. *Do you think you are good at communicating your feelings?*



## K-5 Student to Family Cooperative Activity Ideas:

- Create a home theater space: Dedicate a specific area in your home as a temporary theater space. It can be anywhere with a little bit of space to "put on a show". Create a cozy ambiance with lighting and comfortable seating.
- Create tickets and programs: Design and print them at home or even hand made. Deliver the tickets to family members, and the programs can include information about the performance, cast, and crew. This adds a touch of authenticity and excitement.
- Snack bar and concessions: Set up a snack bar or concessions stand with a variety of treats and refreshments. You can even create special themed snacks related to the performance you are watching.
- Interactive viewing experience: Encourage audience participation during the performance. For example, during a musical, you can sing along to the songs and clap during applause-worthy moments!
- Post-show discussions: After the performance, have a family discussion about the show. Share your thoughts, favorite moments, and discuss the themes or lessons portrayed. This can foster critical thinking and encourage creativity in your kids.
- **Remember, the goal is to create a memorable and immersive experience. Adapt these ideas based on your family's preferences and the resources available to you. The key is to have fun and enjoy the theater experience in your digs!**

### Additional Activity Ideas:



- Memory jars: Create a memory jar with your children. Write down favorite childhood memories on small pieces of paper and put them in a jar. Each week or month, take turns pulling out a memory and sharing it. This can spark conversations and lead to further discussions about your childhood experiences, and theirs too!
- Bedtime stories: Instead of reading traditional bedtime stories, take turns sharing personal stories from your childhood. These could be tales of adventure, funny incidents, or heartwarming experiences. This can create a strong bond between you and your children as you share personal narratives.
- Encourage your kids to create their own journals or scrapbooks to document their childhood memories. Take the opportunity to share your childhood stories as you help them with their own projects. You can even contribute by adding some of your own stories or mementos to their journals.
- What was your favorite song, band or genre growing up? Play a few songs for your child/children and let them play a few of their favorites for you!
- Create traditions with your child/children!: Establish special rituals or traditions that you can share. It could be a weekly movie night, cooking together on weekends, going for a walk after dinner, or singing at the top of your lungs before bedtime.

# M/H Student to Family Cooperative Activity Ideas:

- Cook a themed meal: If the play had cultural or culinary references, consider cooking a themed meal together as a family. Research recipes from that culture or recreate dishes mentioned in the play. This culinary exploration can add a delicious dimension to your theater experience and allow you to immerse yourselves further in the production.
- Watch a related film or documentary: If there are any film adaptations or documentaries related to the play or its subject matter, plan a family movie night to watch them together. This can provide additional context, offer a different perspective, or deepen your understanding of the themes explored in the theater production.
- Share impressions and discuss the play: Sit down with your kids and have a conversation about the play you all watched. Share your impressions, thoughts, and emotions. Discuss the elements that stood out to each of you, such as the performances, the set design, or the storytelling. This exchange of perspectives can deepen your understanding and appreciation of the production.
- **Remember, the goal is to create a memorable and immersive experience. Adapt these ideas based on your family's preferences and the resources available to you. The key is to have fun and enjoy the theater experience in your digs!**

## Additional Activity Ideas:

- Attend workshops or classes: Look for theater workshops or classes that interest you and your child. Participating in these educational opportunities can help your kids develop their skills, gain confidence, and connect with others who share their interest in the performing arts.
- Encourage your kids to create their own journals or scrapbooks to document their childhood memories. Take the opportunity to share your childhood stories as you help them with their own projects. You can even contribute by adding some of your own stories or mementos to their journals.
- What was your favorite song, band or genre growing up? Play a few songs for your child/children and let them play a few of their favorites for you!
- Volunteer or participate in theater activities: If your kids have developed a keen interest in theater, encourage them to get involved in local theater groups or school productions. Volunteer backstage, audition for roles, or assist with set design and costumes. This hands-on experience allows us to gain practical knowledge and further nurture a passion for the performing arts, and the whole family can volunteer with the show!



## Standards Alignment: The Nutcracker

**Standards Alignment:** The activities in this guide are aligned with the standards listed below. When teachers incorporate the arts, they increase student engagement, offer multiple points for students to access the curriculum, and provide alternate means for students to demonstrate what they know.

| Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) |   |
|--|---|
| Kindergarten through Grade 12/ English Language Arts           |   |
| ELA.K.12.EE.1.1  | Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.   |
| ELA.K.12.EE.2.1  | Read and comprehend grade-level complex texts proficiently.   |
| ELA.K.12.EE.3.1  | Make inferences to support comprehension.   |
| ELA.K.12.EE.4.1  | Use appropriate collaborative techniques and active listening skills when engaging in discussions in a variety of situations. |
| ELA.K.12.EE.5.1  | Use the accepted rules governing a specific format to create quality work.  |
| ELA.K.12.EE.6.1  | Use appropriate voice and tone when speaking or writing.  |
|  |   |



# New:

Each time you submit student work,  
your name is entered in a drawing  
for tickets to a show  
at the Broward Center:

Fall Show: **HADESTOWN**

Spring Show: **MRS. DOUBTFIRE**

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for your continued support of the SEAS Program. We value the preparation you make before the show to attend the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, and the introduction you forge for the students when the show has concluded to continue making connections long after the buses have returned to school!

If you'd like to share any of the work from the study guides, please use this link:

Click Here to Upload Student Work Samples:

**<https://tinyurl.com/SEAS2324-samples>**



Should you have any questions, please contact  
Lauri Foster at: <mailto:lauri.foster@browardschools.com>

